

## THE USE OF LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH IN TEACHING READING FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

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**Abstract:** This study is intended to figure out how Language Experience Approach (commonly abbreviated as LEA) improves students' motivation and comprehension in reading. The use of this method was chosen as the alternative way in teaching reading for young learners based on its definition. The definition of this method is using students' experience and knowledge as reading material. This study is an exploratory study which was conducted at one of the English course in Bandung and 6 students were participated in the study. Observation, questionnaires, and interview were employed to gain the data. The data were analyzed both qualitative and quantitative. The results of this study show that the implementation of LEA in teaching learning process was quite successful, despite some limitations of this study. The data gained from students' show that LEA can help students improve their motivation and reading comprehensions. Most of the students (86, 67%) respond positively towards the use of LEA during the teaching learning process. The data from observation show that the students actively take participation in learning process. The data from questionnaires also reveal that LEA can help the students increase their motivation and confidence in performing language skills. Students also enjoyed the learning process. They were interested and had motivation to learn writing through LEA. Teacher should paid attention to the selection of material, because it influenced the level of students' motivation and comprehension. The selection of material should be suitable with students' ability and needs. Based on the findings; it is recommended for further studies that LEA should be implemented in teaching reading at any skills and any educational levels.

**Keywords:** *Language Experience Approach (LEA), motivation, reading, comprehension*

### Introduction

Reading plays an important role in learning foreign language. According to Mikulecky (2004), reading is one of the most fundamental skills that are inquired in learning a language as it influences other general language skills like speaking, listening, and writing. Reading helps students get more information and improves student ability to think in English. Unfortunately, some learners have difficulties in understanding reading, they also show lack of motivation in reading class.

Therefore teacher needs suitable method to achieve the goals of reading. This research was intended to introduce Language Experience Approach (LEA) as a method in teaching reading and investigated how LEA improves students' motivation and reading comprehension. This also was aimed to figure out teacher and students' response the use of LEA in teaching reading for young learners.

According to the discussion, Allan (1963, as cited in Wurr, 2002) introduces Language Experience Approach (LEA) as a method in teaching language. The method uses students' experience and knowledge as reading material. Stauffer (1970) states, LEA is an effective instructional method in teaching language, because it combines and integrates four skills components in language learning. The statement supports Brown (2001) opinion that reading ability will develop best in association with writing, listening and speaking.

Stauffer (1970) mentions some reasons in using Language Experience Approach as an alternative teaching reading method for young learners. First, it supports developmentally appropriate instruction for children. Second, it supports balanced instruction that includes the reading and writing of authentic text together with the explicit strategy instruction. Thirds, it fosters integrated learning. The last, it combines all the components of the teaching learning. According to those reasons, the implementation of LEA will be needed to improve the quality of teaching reading and achieve the objectives if the learning process.

There are some procedures in implementing LEA as a teaching method. Dixon and Nessel (1983) introduces five cycles in conducting LEA in the classroom:

1. Preparing dictation. In this cycle teacher should provide familiar and important topic for the material and ask students to share their stories related with the topic.
2. Taking dictation. In this cycle teacher asks some students to come forward and share their experiences in front of the class while teacher writes down the story on board exactly what students say.

3. Reading the story. In this cycle, teacher asks students to read the story together loudly. Then, give them time to read the story individually to check their understanding.
4. Conducting follow-up activities. In this cycle, teacher can use several of activities related to the topic to support learning process.
5. Developing basic skills. In this cycle, teacher can develop the material based on the students' needs.

This paper will reveal how LEA improves students' motivation and comprehension in reading. Research data will be taken from 6 students from one of English Course in Bandung. Questionnaire, observation and interview will be used as the data for this research.

The aim of this study is to find out how LEA improves students motivation and reading comprehension and also teacher and students' response toward the use of LEA in teaching reading for young learner.

### **Research Metodology**

This study is conducted to find out how LEA improves the motivation and reading comprehension and the response from teacher and students toward the use of Language Experience Approach in teaching reading for young learners.

In this research, the writer applied an exploratory study which aimed to investigate new or uncommon phenomenon of which little is known, guided by general interest or to prepare further study, or to develop the methods. The participants in this research are 6 students of Junior talk 6 Speak Up! English Course in Bandung.

There are some considerations in choosing the participant of this research. First, the students already have good knowledge of language learning. Second, small class observation facilitate the writer in observing, identifying, and capturing the interaction between teacher and students. The last, English Course as an informal educational institution has simple and applicable syllabus which would be easier to be modified with the procedures of LEA.

The data for this research were gained from observation, questionnaire and interview. The data will be analyzed qualitative and quantitative.

### **Data Presentation and Discussion**

Questionnaire was addressed to teachers and students which was held before and after the implementation of LEA. Teachers' questionnaire result showed largely of them did not familiar with the term of LEA. Nevertheless, they have been used the same method which similar with LEA.

Students' first questionnaire result showed they had lack of motivation in reading. The result can be seen on the table below.

Q	Y	K	T	Percentage		
1.	3	1	2	50%	16.67%	33.33%
2.	1	4	1	16.67%	66.67%	16.67%
3.	2	4	0	33.33%	66.67%	0
4.	1	5	0	16.67%	83.33%	0
5.	6	0	0	100%	0	0
6.	1	4	1	16.67%	66.67%	16.67%
7.	2	4	0	33.33%	66.67%	0
8.	3	3	0	50%	50%	0
9.	4	2	0	66.67%	33.33%	0
10	1	5	0	16.67%	83.33%	0

Details : Q = Question Number

Y = Ya

K = Kadang

T = Tidak

On the contrary, the second questionnaire result showed students' motivation increased during the implementation of LEA. They claimed that LEA helped them understand the material and encouraged their motivation and confidence. The result also showed that the level of materials influenced students' motivation and comprehension of reading. The result can be seen from the table below:

Q	Y	K	T	Percentage		
1.	2	3	1	33.33%	50%	16.67%
2.	3	3	0	50%	50%	0
3.	1	5	0	16.67%	83.33%	0
4.	1	5	0	16.67%	83.33%	0
5.	1	4	1	16.67%	66.67%	16.67%
6.	5	1	0	83.33%	16.67%	0
7.	5	1	0	83.33%	16.67%	0
8.	1	5	0	16.67%	83.33%	0
9.	1	4	1	16.67%	66.67%	16.67%
10	3	1	2	50%	16.67%	33.33%

The findings are in line with Hall (1982), interesting topic will create interesting stories for reading material from students.

The data from observation showed that students were able to adapt with the procedures of LEA. They showed good improvements through the implementation of LEA. The improvements was influenced by some factors, such as: interesting and familiar topic for material, the variety of interesting activities, the use of teaching media and also teachers' competence in conducting the method. Initially observation showed students were confused in understanding the instruction given by teacher and they indicated reluctance to participate in learning process. That reluctance decreased gradually after several meetings. The improvements of motivation and comprehensions could be seen both in fast learners and slow learners, though it happened in different way. In fast learners' students, the improvements can be seen from their strong urge in becoming the volunteers for telling the stories. LEA also helped them optimized and maximized their thinking and knowledge. On the other hand, LEA helped slow learner students improved their courage and confidence in using their ability. Their vocabularies also increased by the influence of others' knowledge. LEA gave them chance to upgrade and optimized their ability. Robisson (1983) beliefs LEA is a natural way to build children's expressive and cognitive activities. Slow learners' students faced some difficulties in connecting with unfamiliar topic for material. Although they improved a lot, teacher still needed to ask them to participate in the class.

The data from interview was obtained from teacher and students. Teacher's interview was held three times: before, during and after the implementation of LEA as a teaching method. The data showed that teacher was not familiar with LEA at first and she had some obstacles in conducting LEA. Teacher claimed that LEA was a good method for teaching reading because it accommodated all the language skills. Furthermore, LEA helped teacher improved her teaching by the searching of supplementary activities which supported the implementation of LEA. The finding was a follow-up from Hall (1982) that teacher responsible in providing important and interesting theme or topic for material

The data interview from students conducted to gain students' responses toward the use of LEA in teaching reading. Interview was held two times, before and after the implementation of LEA. From the first, students showed lack of motivation in reading. They felt bored and sleepy during the reading class. In the second interview, students showed improvements in motivation and reading comprehension. The success LEA depended on the material given. Interesting and familiar topic for material supported the improvements of students' motivation and comprehension. The ability of teacher in delivering the material with various activities also contributes to the success of LEA.

### **Conclusion**

From the gained data, it can be concluded that LEA helped students' improved students' motivation and reading comprehension. It can be seen from the results that both teacher and students gave positive response toward the use of LEA in teaching reading for young learners. The success of LEA was supported by the appropriate selection of materials and teacher's capability in adapting the material to the procedures of LEA. Thus, the selection of LEA should be compatible with students' ability and need



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